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There is probably no subject which would appeal to as many people, or present better opportunities for investigation, than the history of the American Indian. Yet it is a subject not generally known or appreciated, in spite of the fact that the bureau of American ethnology has been for the past thirty-two years publishing the results of comprehensive researches into various phases of the life history of the native Americans. In the course of its service the bureau has collected researches into Indian languages, customs, government and social organizations, religious, music and arts and industries, as well as into the physical and mental characteristics of the people; studies covering nearly sixty linguistic families and more than 300 tribes. Its publications total twenty-seven reports, fifty-one bulletins and several volumes of miscellaneous contributions.

The latest publications, designated as the twenty-seventh annual report, deal in the first part with the administration and operations of the bureau, and in the second with the story of the Omaha tribes, the latter a monograph of about 500 pages, illustrated by sixty-five plates and 133 text figures. This monograph is the joint production of Miss Alice C. Fletcher, who for thirty years has enjoyed exceptional opportunities for ethnological studies among the Omaha people, and Mr. Francis La Flesche, himself an Omaha, the son of a former principal chief. This peculiarly fortunate collaboration gives the paper special significance as an important contribution to American ethnology, and it forms the most complete monograph of an Indian tribe which has yet appeared.

**Home of the Tribes.**  
The Indians forming the Omaha tribe now live in the state of Nebraska, in the counties of Burr, Cuming and Thurston, where land was ceded to them by an act of congress in 1852, amended in 1853. On the reservation, selected by a once great tribe of Siguan stock, which had begun several centuries before a westward migration from its home in the east, "near a great body of water," probably in the Appalachian mountains.

Although there were at one time many tribes which together constituted the Omaha group, today only five have obvious connection—the Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kansas and Quapaw; these five are closely bound together by language, organization and religion.

Both the Omaha sacred legend, with which the paper deals at some length, covering their early migration to their settlement in the west, and the researches of the authors, show the Omaha to have been a quiet and peaceably inclined people, maintaining an attitude of defense rather than arrogance toward other tribes and the white settlers. It is recorded that the Omahas were never at war with the government and that it is the only tribe which has continued to live in Nebraska since the advent of the white settlers.

When not traveling the Omaha established their villages near streams, convenient to timber, and generally on hill-sides, where good garden sites could be obtained. Here their dwellings took the form of either earth lodges, conical tents or tipis. Some of the tipis were so large that the frames of several buffaloes were required to make a single covering. Each family had a corral of horses and cultivated a certain part of the hill-sides or lowlands, where corn and other vegetables were raised for winter provisions and for trade. Corn and maize was the principal food and every household had its garden where the corn was carefully planted, weeded and hoed until it was well grown. Squashes, melons and beans were grown, and sometimes in the same field with the corn, the stalks serving as poles for the beans.

**Annual Buffalo Hunt.**  
In the summer, after the crops were well advanced, the whole tribe, except the aged, the sick and a few who acted as guards, went on the annual buffalo hunt. This was always conducted with great ceremony and was under the control of the leader selected for the occasion.

The yearly hunt was an event of supreme importance to the whole tribe, for as its results depended the annual supply of food, as well as the skins for clothing and trade. The leader of the hunt had an assistant, who answered to his name and took all the blame in case anything went wrong. This official scapegoat, being appointed by the chief, held his office with dignity and remarkable good nature. Some hunting for deer and elk was done in a desultory way in the winter by small parties and even by individuals. Fish was a popular article of diet. Men, women and children fished either with strange hookless lines or by driving the fish into shallow water, where they were shot with arrows, speared or captured by hand.

The individual Omahas takes a practical view of nature and human life rather than a fanciful one, and while they may tend to make him somewhat prosaic, it also develops his mind and leads to a certain steadiness of character, placing the value of thought above emotion. This is undoubtedly the cause of tribal control in certain instances, where the individual disappears and the people are considered as a whole.

**Mental Qualities.**  
It appears that the Omaha tribe is a group of native Americans, sturdy in mind and body, more given to industrial than to artistic pursuits, yet gifted with an elemental statesmanship and an ability to discover the power of a religious motive for the preservation of social order and the maintenance of peace. Although good fighters, they came to recognize that fighting was not their only route to achievement, but was best employed (as their word for "tribe" indicated) when exercised for defense of their homes and the integrity of the tribe.

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